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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 NEW DELHI 002884

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SUBJECT: DHARAMSALA DISQUIET: AS EIGHTH ROUND FAILS,
TIBETANS LOOK TO MID-NOVEMBER MEETING

Classified By: Acting Political Counselor Les Viguerie for Reasons 1.4
(B and D)

11. (C) Summary: During meetings over the past two weeks, Tempa Tsering, Representative of the Dalai Lama, updated PolOff on recent developments that have catapulted Tibet into the international headlines. Tsering stressed that the Dalai Lama's renewal of his demanding travel schedule proves his good health despite undergoing complicated surgery. Although staying mum in the media, Tsering confided that the latest round of negotiations with the PRC were no different from the previous seven rounds and that the PRC rejected the Tibetan memorandum for autonomy. All eyes will be on Dharamsala on November 17 when the emergency meeting on Tibet's future convenes with 500 participants from across the globe. Until then, the Tibetans are holding their cards close to their crimson robes. End Summary.

A Healthy His Holiness?

12. (C) Tsering candidly described the Dalai Lama's health ordeal over the past three months. He reported that when the Dalai Lama was admitted to a Mumbai hospital in late August, doctors advised him to immediately undergo surgery to remove gall stones. Dismissing their warnings, the Dalai Lama chose instead to try traditional Tibetan medicine. After weeks without progress, the Dalai Lama's traditional physicians urged him to have a thorough physical in a western hospital, which led to the decision to remove the gall stones through laproscopic surgery. Tsering confided that while the surgery was supposed to last 25 minutes, surgeons discovered that the Dalai Lama's gall bladder was septic and had to operate for over three hours. He noted that this led to a protracted recovery, but emphasized that the Dalai Lama is now in excellent health and plans to travel to Nigeria and several European countries before the year's end.

Memo's a No-Go

13. (C) The Dalai Lama's delegation, led by Special Envoy Lodi Gyari, returned to Dharamsala on Thursday, November 6 after a week in China. Tsering reported that the envoys met with Du Qinglin, Minister of the Central United Work Front; Zhu Weiqun, Executive Vice Minister; and Pema Trinley, Executive Vice-Governor from the Tibet Autonomous Region (Comment - which the envoys pointedly labeled as "on the Chinese side," End Comment.). Experts on the Chinese constitution briefed the Tibetan envoys during a meeting that was moderated by Lhakpa Phuntsok of the China Tibetology Research Center.

14. (C) Before the round, Tsering had told us he was

disillusioned with the process. He noted that during July's round of talks, PRC negotiators requested the Tibetans to clarify the meaning of "autonomy" in the Dalai Lama's proposal and explain how the proposal complies with the Chinese constitution. The Tibetans, with the aid of several legal experts, prepared a detailed memorandum, which they presented this week. Tsering characterized the Chinese request as another "stall tactic" aimed at "wriggling out of international pressure" to seriously engage with the Tibetan delegation. After the envoys returned, Tsering reasserted his belief and reported that the PRC "outright rejected" the Tibetan memorandum as "independence disguised as autonomy." Summing up another failed round, he declared "nothing came through." The envoys briefed Prime Minister-in-exile Samdhong Rinpoche and the Dalai Lama upon their return, but they refused to make public remarks about the outcome of the negotiations before the mid-November emergency meeting.

15. (C) Asked about recent comments made by the Dalai Lama alluding to his resignation and the failure of the "middle way," Tsering explained the Dalai Lama is frustrated with the PRC characterization of him as "the problem and not the solution." Tsering emphasized the comments do not yet signal a change in policy. The Dalai Lama intends for the decisions made at the November meeting to shape future strategy. Tsering admitted he is not sure whether the public remarks helped or harmed the negotiations in Beijing.

Speculation Abounds

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16. (C) The Dharamsala meeting, called for by the Dalai Lama after the Beijing Olympics, will take place the week of November 17. The Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile, which is coordinating the event, expects 500 attendees at the plenary session. Tsering told PolOff all attendees must be Tibetan; no "outsiders" will be permitted to observe or participate in the meetings. Tsering characterized the mood of Tibetan refugees in India as "impatient." He declined to make predictions about the meeting's outcome but expects to hear "heated discussions and differing views," adding that this would be the first of many such meetings. Tsering underscored that the Dalai Lama will support the will of the Tibetan people provided the strategy remains peaceful; otherwise, he will resign.

17. (C) Comment: The results of the eighth round of talks come as no surprise; consequently, the real buzz surrounds the unpredictability of the emergency meeting. Rumblings in diplomatic circles question whether the Dalai Lama will resign if the Tibetans choose independence over his middle way; however, no one dares to make a prediction at this point. Post will continue to pulse its contacts to determine to what extent the upcoming meeting will impact the long-held strategy pursued by the Tibetan government-in-exile vis--vis the Chinese government. End Comment.

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